

TALKING PAPER

MAPA

30 May 05

SUBJECT: West Point School/Highland Falls School District

PART A – West Point School Background/Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery School Background

- West Point School as a Department of Defense School has been in existence since 1950. However, since 1816 to 1950 the West Point School was run by the United States Military Academy (USMA) as part of its operating budget.
- Currently grades pre-school through eighth grade attend the West Point School (810 students). High School (9-12) students attend the local High School, approximately 190 West Point students. Total enrollment at the local High School is 567.
- The West Point School budget is approximately \$13.7M or \$16.9K per student per year (pure budget ÷ students). Budget figures include capital costs in 02/03.
- The West Point School budget includes some payments to USMA through an Inter-Service Support Agreement (ISSA). Costs include paying DHPW \$145K for utility support, \$5K to DOL for logistical support (some transportation), and \$35K to DOIM for annual information tech support. Total to USMA \$185K.
- The Highland Falls School District budget is approximately \$20M or \$14.7K per student per year (pure budget ÷ students). Budget figures include capital costs in 02/03.
- Of the \$20M that the Highland Falls School District expends, \$4.2M is Section 8002b Impact Aid and \$1.8M for tuition of West Point high school students. The tuition contract was initiated in 1985-86 by DOD as a result of the deficit being created by cutbacks in Impact Aid. The contract was approved by Secretary of Army John O. Marsh, Jr., Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger, and the Department of Justice.
- Comparative standardized test scores indicate that West Point students excel in academics when compared to the Highland Falls School District (K-8). See TAB B1.
- The West Point School has strong links to USMA. The school calendar mirrors the academic schedule, thus de-conflicting school breaks, etc. This allows staff and faculty at USMA, with children in grades K-8, the opportunity to effectively plan leave opportunities and ensures an orderly summer transition.

- By New York State law, West Point parents are not permitted to seek a seat on the local school board. However, USMA is allowed to have a non-voting member on the school board. The current member is COL Joe Myers (Dept of Math).
- West Point effectively uses the presence of the DODEA school on West Point as a retention and recruiting tool for well-qualified teachers and professors. These individuals have to be recruited from the active Army, and although it is an honor to teach at West Point, it also takes a soldier away from mainstream troop assignments for five to six years.
- The teaching staff at USMA are predominately officers, all must be college grads to be promoted to Captain, most with advanced degrees. Parents with these attributes tend to value education highly and given the track record of the West Point School, would certainly be concerned over the effects of a transfer.
- New York State does not accept legal jurisdiction over the Academy students. Other state laws make transfer of the facilities or LEA access difficult. (Reference legal opinion 1984 Robert Stone, Chief Legal Counsel of New York Department of Education, "West Point is a federal enclave and not part of New York State. Local school district not compelled to provide free education.)
- Under current guidelines, Highland Falls School District would not recover the local per-pupil expenditures needed from Impact Aid and local officials do not trust the continuance of Impact Aid. This would create an undo hardship on the local school district if it were forced to take over the West Point School. (Example, teacher's salaries at the WPS are on average considerably higher than the local school district.)
- Military parents are concerned that their children would lose the individualized education and flexible schedule they now have if a transfer occurs. (Comment from Rand Study conducted at West Point and other CONUS DOD schools.)
- Military parents do not want to give up the influence they have over their children's education (K-8) as they can currently, through annual elections, be a member of the West Point School Board. (Comment from Rand Study.)
- Current Force Protection issues now create a security concern that heretofore was not an issue, thus impeding the possibility of an LEA run system on West Point.
- The issue of personnel will require special legislation to allow current employees to buy into the New York State Teachers retirement system.
- The West Point School is not bound by state law so it is able to tailor its calendar to the needs of the West Point population.

PART B – West Point School Gym Project

- The West Point Middle School has an outdated small gym that was built in 1934. The gym is inaccessible to handicapped students. (See TAB A, page 1)
- The West Point Elementary School offers physical education in a multi-purpose room that shares space with the lunch program and the school's occupational/physical therapy program. (See TAB A, page 1)
- A new gym will serve both the elementary and middle school students and will bring physical education at these schools into the 21st century.
- The gym is a cornerstone project of the 21st Century master plan of the West Point School. See TAB B2. The master plan calls for additional classrooms to lower student/teacher ratios in grades K-3 from 1 : 23 to 1 : 18. The plan also calls for a new cafeteria and multi-media space in the future.